

Commission (EEOC) or the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), or pursuant to a negotiated grievance procedure under a collective bargaining agreement to which the Government is a party;

(3) In response to requests by Federal Government counsel in litigation conducted on behalf of the United States;

(4) As part of the assistance required pursuant to DoD Directive 5220.6, "Industrial Personnel Security Clearance Program," December 20 1976; or,

(5) Pursuant to disclosure of information to Federal, State, and local prosecuting and law enforcement authorities, in conjunction with an investigation conducted by a DoD criminal investigative organization.

(c) This Directive does not supersede or modify existing laws or DoD program governing the testimony of DoD personnel or the release of official DoD information during grand jury proceedings, the release of official information not involved in litigation, or the release of official information pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, or the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, nor does this Directive preclude treating any written request for agency records that is not in the nature of legal process as a request under the Freedom of Information or Privacy Acts.

(d) This Directive is not intended to infringe upon or displace the responsibilities committed to the Department of Justice in conducting litigation on behalf of the United States in appropriate cases.

(e) This Directive does not preclude official comment on matters in litigation in appropriate cases.

(f) This Directive is intended only to provide guidance for the internal operation of the Department of Defense and is not intended to, does not, and may not be relied upon to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law against the United States or the Department of Defense.

### § 97.3 Definitions.

(a) *Demand.* Subpoena, order, or other demand of a court of competent jurisdiction, or other specific authority, for the production, disclosure, or release of official DoD information or for the ap-

pearance and testimony of DoD personnel as witnesses.

(b) *DoD personnel.* Present and former U.S. military personnel; Service Academy cadets and midshipmen; and present and former civilian employees of any Component of the Department of Defense, including nonappropriated fund activity employees; non-U.S. nationals who perform services overseas, under the provisions of status of forces agreements, for the U.S. Armed Forces; and other specific individuals hired through contractual agreements by or on behalf of the Department of Defense.

(c) *Litigation.* All pretrial, trial, and post-trial stages of all existing or reasonably anticipated judicial or administrative actions, hearings, investigations, or similar proceedings before civilian courts, commissions, boards (including the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals), or other tribunals, foreign and domestic. This term includes responses to discovery requests, depositions, and other pretrial proceedings, as well as responses to formal or informal requests by attorneys or others in situations involving litigation.

(d) *Official information.* All information of any kind, however stored, that is in the custody and control of the Department of Defense, relates to information in the custody and control of the Department, or was acquired by DoD personnel as part of their official duties or because of their official status within the Department while such personnel were employed by or on behalf of the Department or on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces.

### § 97.4 Policy.

It is DoD policy that official information should generally be made reasonably available for use in Federal and State courts and by other governmental bodies unless the information is classified, privileged, or otherwise protected from public disclosure.

### § 97.5 Responsibilities.

(a) The *General Counsel, Department of Defense*, shall provide general policy and procedural guidance by the issuance of supplemental instructions

or specific orders concerning the release of official DoD information in litigation and the testimony of DoD personnel as witnesses during litigation.

(b) The *Heads of DoD Components* shall issue appropriate regulations to implement this Directive and to identify official information that is involved in litigation.

#### § 97.6 Procedures.

(a) *Authority to act.* (1) In response to a litigation request or demand for official DoD information or the testimony of DoD personnel as witnesses, the General Counsels of DoD, Navy, and the Defense Agencies; the Judge Advocates General of the Military Departments; and the Chief Legal Advisors to the JCS and the Unified and Specified Commands, with regard to their respective Components, are authorized—after consulting and coordinating with the appropriate Department of Justice litigation attorneys, as required—to determine whether official information may be released in litigation; whether DoD personnel assigned to or affiliated with the Component may be interviewed, contacted, or used as witnesses concerning official DoD information or as expert witnesses; and what, if any, conditions will be imposed upon such release, interview, contact, or testimony. Delegation of this authority, to include the authority to invoke appropriate claims of privilege before any tribunal, is permitted.

(2) In the event that a DoD Component receives a litigation request or demand for official information originated by another Component, the receiving Component shall forward the appropriate portions of the request or demand to the originating Component for action in accordance with this Directive. The receiving Component shall also notify the requestor, court, or other authority of its transfer of the request or demand.

(3) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (a) (1) and (2) of this section, the General Counsel, DoD, in litigation involving terrorism, espionage, nuclear weapons, intelligence means or sources, or otherwise as deemed necessary, may notify Components that General Counsel, DoD, will assume pri-

mary responsibility for coordinating all litigation requests and demands for official DoD information or testimony of DoD personnel, or both; consulting with the Department of Justice, as required; and taking final action on such requests and demands.

(b) *Factors to consider.* In deciding whether to authorize the release of official DoD information or the testimony of DoD personnel concerning official information (hereafter referred to as “the disclosure”) pursuant to paragraph (a), DoD officials should consider the following types of factors:

(1) Whether the request or demand is unduly burdensome or otherwise inappropriate under the applicable court rules;

(2) Whether the disclosure, including release *in camera*, is appropriate under the rules of procedure governing the case or matter in which the request or demand arose;

(3) Whether the disclosure would violate a statute, executive order, regulation, or directive;

(4) Whether the disclosure, including release *in camera*, is appropriate or necessary under the relevant substantive law concerning privilege;

(5) Whether the disclosure, except when *in camera* and necessary to assert a claim of privilege, would reveal information properly classified pursuant to DoD 5200.1-R, “Information Security Program Regulation,” August 1982; unclassified technical data withheld from public release pursuant to DoD Directive 5230.25, “Withholding of Unclassified Technical Data from Public Disclosure,” November 6, 1984; or other matters exempt from unrestricted disclosure; and,

(6) Whether disclosure would interfere with ongoing enforcement proceedings, compromise constitutional rights, reveal the identity of an intelligence source or confidential informant, disclose trade secrets or similarly confidential commercial or financial information, or otherwise be inappropriate under the circumstances.

(c) *Decisions on litigation requests and demands.* (1) Subject to paragraph (c)(5) of this section, DoD personnel shall not, in response to a litigation request or demand, produce, disclose, release, comment upon, or testify concerning